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Memorandum for Mr. Robertson

From: Edwin W. Martin

## SUBJECT: Comments on Molotov's May 14 speech

The Molotov speech of May 14 on Indochina was described in SACP 232 as the "most significant Communist pronouncement thus far at the conference". I have no cause to disagree with this estimate. But it may be of some interest to analyze possible reasons why this speech on an Asian question was delivered by Molotov rather than by Chou En-lai, Communism's "Asian spokesman".

It seems to me there are at least four factors which make Molotov the logical Communist spokesman on this occasion.

1. As the major Communist speech so far, it was not unnatural that the acknowledged leader of the Communist side should make it. While both the Soviet and Chinese Communist representatives have been careful to avoid any appearance at the conference that Chou En-lai is a mere stooge to be ordered around by Molotov, there has been little effort to disguise Molotov's No. 1 rank on the Communist side here. While the evidences of this are small in themselves, they have been consistent enough to create a definite impression. One example is the order of speaking: In the Korean phase, Chou En-lai and Molotov; in the Korean phase, Van Gork, Chou and Molotov; in the Indochina phase, another is the order of going out from the lounge - Molotov always goes first followed by Chou, or if they walk out together, it is always on Molotov's initiative; no Communist leaves the lounge before Molotov and none lingers after he has left. The order of distributing speeches by the Viet Minh provides another example. The first copy is placed on Molotov's desk, the second on Chou En-lai's, and then around the room. These observable patterns of behavior, though seemingly minor, reflect an accepted relationship in the Communist hierarchy and are not accidental. They are entirely consistent with the role in which Peking propaganda casts the Soviet Union - as "elder brother", "wise teacher" and "powerful friend". Molotov's role among the Communist representatives at the Conference merely reflects this acknowledged relationship.

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2. Since the Peiping regime is more closely and concretely identified with the Viet Minh aggression than the Soviet Union, Molotov is in a better position to initiate compromise moves. The fact that Peiping provides substantial direct material support to the Viet Minh across its borders and the fact that its intervention in this form has been highly publicized by the U. S. and is generally acknowledged throughout the non-Communist world gives the Peiping regime (despite its public denials) the status of quasi-belligerent in Indochina. Molotov, on the other hand, can more easily assume a pose of detached interest, representing a country remote from the scene of action. Molotov may be seeking to create the impression that he is in a position to exercise a restraining influence on his junior colleagues representing Peiping and Viet Minh, if the West will only be reasonable. Zhou, on the other hand, is hardly in a position even to pretend to the moderator's role.

3. The Molotov speech, being a maneuver primarily aimed at the French and British, comes more effectively from the Soviet Union which is a European as well as an Asian power. It can thus carry implications for Soviet policies in Europe which might have some effect on the British and French attitude whereas Communist China is remote from Europe and does not even have diplomatic relations with either the British or the French.

4. The gestures towards compromise with the West contained in the speech do not fit in with the uncompromising tone of Peiping propaganda. Peiping has generally avoided any public gestures which might be construed as conciliatory towards the West (despite certain advantages which it might gain therefrom); it has continued to pursue a hard and inflexible propagandist line. It is speaking primarily to an Asian audience, which it seeks to impress with its strength and the inevitability of its triumph. Moreover, the Peiping regime is extremely sensitive to any show of what it would consider to be weakness; therefore, any move in the direction of moderation of Communist terms on Indochina, even though tactically advantageous, it probably would prefer to have come from the Soviet Union, at least at this stage.